AMENDED CLAIM SET

The claims have been amended as set forth in the following listing of the claims:

1. (Canceled)
2. (Canceled)
3. (Canceled)
4. (Canceled)
5. (Canceled)
6. (Canceled)
7. (Canceled)
8. (Canceled
9. (Canceled)
10. (Canceled)
11. (Canceled)
12. (Canceled)
13. (Canceled)
14. (Canceled)
15. (Canceled)
16. (Canceled)
17. (Canceled)
18. (Canceled)
19. (Canceled)
20. (Canceled)
21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) A backlight unit operable to illuminate a target ~~the target~~ with fluorescent lamps, comprising: ~~comprising~~

_____a reflection portion adapted to emit light from ~~the light~~ from the fluorescent lamps in a specific direction; and ~~and~~

_____brightness compensation means adapted to compensate for uneven brightness in a longitudinal ~~the longitudinal~~ direction of the fluorescent lamps,

_____wherein the brightness compensation means are provided on the reflection unit and control the reflectance of the reflection portion to compensate for uneven brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

23. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of claim 22, wherein the brightness compensation means have regions with relatively high and low reflectances in the reflection portion and take advantage of the difference in reflectance to compensate for uneven brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

24. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of claim 23, wherein the brightness compensation means have a reflectance gradient that causes the reflectance of the reflection portion to decline gradually or in stages and take advantage of the reflectance gradient to reduce the brightness of the portion with a relatively high brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

25. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of claim 23, wherein the brightness compensation means have a reflectance gradient that causes the reflectance of the reflection portion to increase gradually or in stages and take advantage of the reflectance gradient to increase the brightness of the portion with a relatively low brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

26. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of claim 24, wherein the brightness compensation means have a reflectance gradient that causes the reflectance of the reflection portion to increase gradually or in stages and take advantage of the reflectance gradient to increase the brightness of the portion with a relatively low brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

27. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of any one of claims 22 to 26, wherein the brightness compensation means are a dot pattern provided on the reflection portion and take advantage of the dot pattern to control the reflectance of the reflection portion.

28. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of claim 27, wherein the reflectance of the reflection portion provided with the dot pattern is controlled by one or a plurality of the reflectance of the group of small dots making up the dot pattern, the dot density, the dot shape, and the dot color.

29. (Currently Amended) A backlight unit operable to illuminate a target ~~the target~~ with fluorescent lamps, comprising: ~~comprising~~

_____a reflection portion adapted to emit light from ~~the light from~~ the fluorescent lamps in a specific direction; and ~~direction and~~

_____brightness compensation means adapted to compensate for uneven brightness in a longitudinal ~~the longitudinal~~ direction of the fluorescent lamps,

_____wherein the reflection portion is made up of first and second reflection layers having given optical reflectance and transmittance levels,

_____wherein the reflection portion is configured with a first region having the first and second reflection layers stacked one above another in the direction of incidence of light and a second region made up only of the first reflection layer, and

_____wherein the reflectance of the reflection portion is controlled using the first region with a relatively high reflectance and the second region with a reflectance lower than that of the first region.

30. (Previously Presented) A backlight unit operable to illuminate the target with fluorescent lamps comprising brightness compensation means adapted to compensate for uneven brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps, wherein the brightness compensation means are provided on a glass tube of the fluorescent lamps and control the transmittance of the glass tube to compensate for uneven brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

31. (Previously Presented) A backlight unit operable to illuminate the target with fluorescent lamps comprising a diffusion portion adapted to diffuse the light from the fluorescent lamps and brightness compensation means adapted to compensate for uneven brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps, wherein the brightness compensation means are provided on the diffusion portion and control the transmittance of the diffusion portion to compensate for uneven brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

32. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of claim 30 or 31, wherein the brightness compensation means have regions with relatively high and low transmittances in the glass tube or the diffusion portion and take advantage of the difference in the transmittance to compensate for uneven brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

33. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of claim 32, wherein the brightness compensation means have a transmittance gradient that causes the transmittance to decline gradually or in stages and take advantage of the transmittance gradient to reduce the brightness of the portion with a relatively high brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

34. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of claim 32, wherein the brightness compensation means have a transmittance gradient that causes the transmittance to increase gradually or in stages and take advantage of the transmittance gradient to increase the brightness of the portion with a relatively low brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

35. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of claim 33, wherein the brightness compensation means have a transmittance gradient that causes the transmittance to increase gradually or in stages and take advantage of the transmittance gradient to increase the brightness of the portion with a relatively low brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

36. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of claim 30 or 31, wherein the brightness compensation means are a dot pattern provided on the glass tube of the fluorescent lamps or the diffusion portion and take advantage of the dot pattern to control the transmittance.

37. (Previously Presented) The backlight unit of claim 36, wherein the transmittance of the glass tube or the diffusion portion provided with the dot pattern is controlled by one or a plurality of the reflectance of the group of small dots making up the dot pattern, the dot density, the dot shape, and the dot color.

38. (Currently Amended) A liquid crystal display device, comprising: ~~comprising~~

_____the backlight unit of ~~claim 22~~ claim 29; and

_____a liquid crystal panel illuminated by the backlight unit.

39. (Previously Presented) A liquid crystal display device operable to apply an illumination light from a backlight unit having fluorescent lamps to a liquid crystal panel to display images, wherein the brightness compensation means have a gradation conversion portion operable to carry out a given gradation conversion process of input image data and a control portion operable to switch between gradation conversion characteristics of the gradation conversion portion based on a synchronizing signal of the input image data, and wherein the control portion switches from one gradation conversion characteristic to another in the gradation conversion portion based on the screen position to display the image data to compensate for uneven brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

40. (Previously Presented) A liquid crystal display device operable to apply an illumination light from a backlight unit having fluorescent lamps to a liquid crystal panel to display images, wherein the liquid crystal panel is configured to have, as the brightness compensation means, an aperture ratio that changes correspondingly with the display screen position, and wherein the aperture ratio is changed to compensate for uneven brightness in the longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.

41. (New) A backlight unit operable to illuminate a target with fluorescent lamps, comprising:

a reflection portion adapted to emit light from the fluorescent lamps in a specific direction; and

brightness compensation means adapted to compensate for uneven brightness in a longitudinal direction of the fluorescent lamps.